THE
CATHOLIC RADICAL

"...to foster a society based on creed instead of greed." Peter Maurin

October/November 2012 ***Price: For whatever it's worth.***

Beating Up on the Poor

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Yesterday, while driving up Worcester's Main Street, I saw a truck with numerous Tea Party bumper stickers, including one denouncing socialism. I pulled even with the driver at a stop light, and told him through our open windows, "You know public libraries, schools, the fire department, and even the street we are driving on are the results of socialism." The middle-aged white man in the truck said, "That's not true. Socialism is wasting our taxes to give money to lazy people on welfare." The man was angry. He did not look wealthy, but, clearly, he was blaming his economic woes on government spending for the poor.

The conservative battle cry has long been "Government handouts to the undeserving poor steal hard-earned cash from the middle class!" So successful has this rhetoric been that virtually all politicians, Democrats as well as Republicans, now pander to the middle class, baby the rich, and ignore or vilify the poor.

But who are the poor really? The US Census Bureau's latest figures show that they represent 46.2 million Americans (12.9 million of them children), the highest number in 52 years. Those earning less than $21,000 for a family of three has climbed significantly since 1968, with people of color, single parents, and children suffering the most.

Peter Edelman argues in *The New York Times* (7/28/12) that the blame for growing American poverty lies with falling wages and cuts in government services to the poor. A day later, Tim Worstall refuted Edelman in *Forbes Magazine*, where he said that real poverty, i.e. destitution, had been eliminated in "advanced nations" where "the basic job of feeding the starving, clothing the naked, and sheltering the homeless does get done." He said American poverty was akin to Adam Smith's example of the linen shirt which "may not be a necessity: but if you live in a society where not being able to afford one means you are regarded as poor, then not being able to afford one makes you poor in that society." In other words, the American poor are folks who can meet their real needs, if not "necessities" like an iphone, Patriots tickets, an x-box, or a flat screen TV. If they want those luxuries so badly, they'd just have to work harder to get them. They deserve neither our pity or philanthropy.

After more than 27 years living with the poor, first in Washington, DC and now here in Massachusetts, I have seen something of what Worstall says. Poor Americans will often go into debt to get the

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A Great Gift

by Jo Massarelli

When the second bone marrow transplant failed to halt his lymphoma, my brother Tom's oncologist gave him eight weeks to live. His athletic body was emaciated now, with wasted muscle and grotesquely bloated hands and feet. Simply chewing food was exhausting. He compared crossing the room with accomplishing his trophy-winning triple jump. Worse was the rejection from those who stayed away, too pained to face the clear departure taking place. His loneliness came to me at night, when, sleeping on the floor next to his bed, I would hear him whisper "Jo?" for no reason except to know that someone was there.

And yet the point to Tom's life and death was that someone always was. My four brothers, my husband, and Tom's friends ensconced him in the upstairs den of my parents' home, the intimate center of family life. Here he lived for five months more— dying and living, living and dying — the two so intertwined that his obvious leave-taking could not dampen the rejoicing when he married his Barbara in the living room just weeks before we gathered again for his funeral.

In those five months with Tom, he allowed no denial of what was happening. We came to speak of Death as a rude guest, always interrupting and not knowing when to leave. Yet my brother was not a particularly courageous person. What he did have was the confidence of knowing that whatever he faced, he did so with others who loved him, who loved life, and who know that, in the end, none of us gets to stay.

Accepting that life has a natural end and believing that God gives us our last breath as well as our first (and that both and all in between are of equal worth) are

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The Poor

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junk advertisers insist we need, but this pales when compared to debt brought on by unemployment, low wages, and a pathetic lack of opportunities, especially for women, people of color, and those without a college degree or documentation.

The fact is old-fashioned hard work is not enough to lift a person out of poverty. The federal minimum wage has never been up to the task. The closest it came was in 1968 when it provided 90% of the poverty threshold. It has steadily declined since then until it now yields less than half of a living wage. Not only have real wages for the poor plummeted, in many cases they have evaporated altogether. One of our current guests applied for a restaurant job, which he was offered on condition that he work several weeks of "training" without pay. Companies rely more and more on unpaid interns, who labor for free in the hope that their slavery will morph into paid employment. These practices are probably illegal, but that doesn't stop employers from offering them or desperate workers from accepting them.

Wages are so low nowadays that poor people are driven even poorer by usurious debt from pay day loans, shady for-profit colleges, and rent-to-own furniture and appliance stores. And now, when the poor cannot pay court fees for minor infractions, they are increasingly landing in jail, where those fees mushroom and more and more states charge them for their own incarceration (see Ethan Bronner, *The New York Times*, 7/2/12). The playing field is far from level.

And yet, the stereotype of the lazy poor persists. It was debunked for me in 1982, when I met a homeless Russian immigrant named Anatoly, who told me that human dignity depended on "work and freedom." After months of unsuccessful searching for a job, he jumped off Washington, DC's Connecticut Street bridge. Since then, I've met hundreds whose minimum wage jobs could barely get them a bed-bug infested cranny in a filthy rooming house. I've known bright, creative, and decent people, willing to work hard, who have not been able to afford higher education, housing, or healthcare. Increasingly, we are confronted with desperate people who literally have nowhere to go. Mr. Worstall is flat wrong to say that all the homeless are being sheltered. The trials of downtrodden Americans could come straight out of a Charles Dickens novel. Men, women, and, sad to say, high school students are shivering at night in abandoned building, tents, cars, or under bridges. It is only a matter of time before some of these unfortunates turn up dead.

Cynics take Jesus out of context and say, "**The poor will always be with you,**" absolving themselves and society from making a serious effort to tackle the systematic underpinnings of poverty, but compassionate people know that it is not part of any divine plan that human beings should suffer unnecessarily. God's promise and our duty is to work for a world where "**every tear will be wiped away**." In societies with affordable housing, healthcare, and higher education, and, most importantly, a living wage, you do not find tens of millions of people in poverty generation after generation.

And yet, despite the deepening plight of the poor, Republicans scapegoat them and Democrats pander to the middle class. Speaker after speaker at the Democratic National Convention bemoaned the trials of the middle class. Even Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts liberal running for the US Senate, said "the middle class has been chipped, squeezed, and hammered." She did not appeal for another war on poverty. In fact, she said Matthew 25 (where Christ tells us that whatever we do for the least, we do for Him) inspired her to fight for the middle class. While the recession has hit Americans earning $70-$150,000 hard, they are a long way from the "least" with whom Christ identifies Himself.

Our voices must be distinct from demagogues and all those who despise, mistrust, or sideline the poor. When Jesus calls us to identify Him in them, He invites us to turn the prejudices of society upside down. He reminds us that our spiritual salvation is tied up in the economic salvation of the poor. By the same token, economic health and national prosperity should be measured in terms of how the most needful members of society are doing. When the poor are given equal opportunities, their numbers decline and the entire society, the human family, benefits. Ω

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CATHOLIC RADICAL

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Founded in 1933, The Catholic Worker is a lay movement serving the poor while denouncing injustice and proclaiming peace. We are not tax exempt. We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters to meet our expenses. We welcome volunteers, letters, poetry, articles, artwork, and donations.

In Peace is My Bitterness Most Bitter

by Dorothy Day

Editor's Note. This article is reprinted from The Catholic Worker*, January, 1967.*

It is not just Vietnam, it is South Africa, it is Nigeria, the Congo, Indonesia, all of Latin America. It is not just the pictures of all the women and children who have been burnt alive in Vietnam, or the men who have been tortured, and died. It is not just the headless victims of the war in Colombia. It is not just the words of Cardinal Spellman and Archbishop Hannan. It is the fact that whether we like it or not, we are Americans. It is indeed our country, right or wrong, as the Cardinal said in another context. We are warm and fed and secure (aside from occasional muggings and murders amongst us). We are the nation the most powerful, the most armed and we are supplying arms and money to the rest of the world where we are not ourselves fighting. We are eating while there is famine in the world.

Scripture tells us that the picture of judgment presented to us by Jesus is of Dives sitting and feasting with his friends while Lazarus sat hungry at the gate, the dogs, the scavengers of the East, licking his sores. We are the Dives. Woe to the rich! We are the rich. The works of mercy are the opposite of the works of war, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, nursing the sick, visiting the prisoner. But we are destroying crops, setting fire to entire villages and to the people in them. We are not performing the works of mercy but the works of war. We cannot repeat this enough.

When the apostles wanted to call down fire from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritans, the "enemies" of the Jews, Jesus said to them, "**You know not of what Spirit you are.**" When Peter told our Lord not to accept the way of the Cross and His own death, He said, "**Get behind me, Satan. For you are not on the side of God but of men.**" But He also had said, "**Thou are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.**" Peter denied Jesus three times at that time in history, but after the death on the cross, and the Resurrection and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Peter faced up to Church and State alike and said, "**We must obey God rather than men.**" Deliver us, O Lord, from the fear of our enemies, which makes cowards of us all.

I can sit in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and wrestle for that peace in the

photo of Dorothy Day by Jim Forest

bitterness of my soul, a bitterness which many Catholics throughout the world feel, and I can find many things in Scripture to console me, to change my heart from hatred to love of enemy. "**Our worst enemies are those of our own household**," Jesus said. Picking up the Scriptures at random (as St. Francis used to do) I read about Peter, James, and John who went up on the Mount of Transfiguration and saw Jesus talking with Moses and Elias, transfigured before their eyes. (A hint of the life to come, Maritain said.) Jesus transfigured! He who was the despised of men, no beauty in him, spat upon, beaten, dragged to his cruel death on the way to the cross! A man so much like other men that it took the kiss of a Judas to single him out from the others when the soldiers, so closely allied to the priests, came to take him. Reading this story of the Transfiguration, the words stood out, words foolishly babbled, about the first building project of the Church, proposed by Peter. "**Lord, shall we make here three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elias?**" And the account continues, "**For he did not know what to say, he was so terrified.**"

Maybe they are terrified, these princes of the Church, as we are often terrified at the sight of violence, which is present every now and then in our houses of hospitality, and which is always a threat in the streets of the slums. I have often thought it is a brave thing to do, these Christmas visits of Cardinal Spellman to the American troops all over the world, Europe, Korea, Vietnam. But, oh God what are all these Americans, so-called Christians doing all over the world so far from our own shores?

But what words are those he spoke — going against even the Pope, calling for victory, total victory? Words are as strong and powerful as bombs, as napalm. How much the government counts on those words, pays for those words to exalt our own way of life, to build up fear of the enemy. Deliver us, Lord, from the fear of the enemy. That is one of the lines in the psalms, and we are not asking God to deliver us from enemies but from the fear of them. Love casts out fear, but we have to get over the fear in order to get close enough to love them.

There is plenty to do, for each one of us, working on our own hearts, changing our own attitudes, in our own neighborhoods. If the just man falls seven times daily, we each one of us fall more than that in thought, word, and deed. Prayer and fasting, taking up our own cross daily and following Him, doing penance, these are the hard words of the Gospel.

As to the Church, where else shall we go, except to the Bride of Christ, one flesh with Christ? Though she is a harlot at times, she is our Mother. We should read the book of Hosea, which is a picture of God's steadfast love not only for the Jews, His chosen people, but for His Church, of which we are every one of us members or potential members. Since there is no time with God, we are all one, all one body, Chinese, Russians, Vietnamese, and He has commanded us to love one another.

"**A new commandment I give, that you love others as I have loved you**," not to the defending of your life, but to the laying down of your life.

A hard saying.

"Love is indeed a harsh and dreadful thing" to ask of us, of each one of us, but it is the only answer. Ω

Real Runners Don't Lie

by Scott Schaeffer-Duffy

Now that I've been running for three years, six months, and twenty-two days, and have completed 122 races (103 of them on athlinks.com), I feel qualified to say that authentic runners do *not* lie about their times. We might exaggerate during pre-race trash-talking to psych out an opponent, but everyone knows that race results are easily verified, so it does not pay to lie.

Mark Singer, in *The New Yorker* (8/6/12), exposed a 48-year-old dentist from Michigan, named Kip Litton, who ran an elaborate scam for years cheating in more than a dozen marathons and even setting up an entirely fictitious race online to boost his reputation. In that phony race, he invented names, addresses, emails, and running histories for his imaginary contestants. Later on, Litton had some of these non-existent runners post online testimonials to refute charges that he was a fraud. Litton's efforts spanned years, but he was eventually caught. Like Rosie Ruiz, the infamous Boston Marathon cheater, Litton could neither run nor hide .

Earlier today, I learned about identical twins who managed to post fantastic marathon times by tag teaming each race at the half way point. They got caught when race photos showed a watch on one wrist at the start and on another at the finish. Clever, but not kosher.

And then, US Representative Paul Ryan, the GOP's Vice Presidential nominee, told an interviewer, "I had a two hour and fifty-something" marathon. That's blazing fast! Plenty of serious runners would be happy to finish a marathon at 3:50, never mind 2:50. But when *Runner's World* magazine stated that they could not verify Ryan's time, his campaign backpedaled admitting that he had only run one marathon, the 1990 Grandma's race in Duluth, Minnesota, which he finished in 4:01.

In a prepared statement, Congressman Ryan said: "The race was more than 20 years ago, but my brother Tobin—who ran Boston last year—reminds me that he is the owner of the fastest marathon in the family and has never himself ran [sic] a sub-three. If I were to do any rounding, it would certainly be to four hours, not three. He gave me a good ribbing over this at dinner tonight."

Sorry, Paul, real runners do not "round down" their marathon times by an hour and nine minutes. Two days after Ryan's retraction, 92% of 10,000 respondents to an online poll called his boast "an honest mistake," but runners are less forgiving. On the new website www.paulryantimecalculator.com, I entered my best marathon time of 3:32:31 and was told: "Your Paul Ryan-adjusted Marathon time: 2:33:49. The current Men's World Record for Marathon is 2:03:38. Your Paul Ryan-adjusted time is only 30:11 away from a new Paul Ryan-certified world record!" Ω

Editor's Note: During his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, Representative Ryan made numerous assertions about President Obama which were untrue or misleading. Some advertisements for President Obama's re-election have also been deceptive. We oppose lying by all parties.

The grammatical error in Representative Ryan's prepared statement (using "ran" instead of "run") is a separate, egregious matter. It reminds us of the restaurant in Worcester which posted a sign saying "Restrooms for eating customers only." It's a slippery slope from using the wrong tense, to misplacing modifiers, to downright incomprehensibility.

She

by William Sommers

SHE
Had only an angel's advice
Here in the totality of eternity
After blood and sorrow
Still thought of herself as a mother

SHE
Could hear the rumbles
Over centuries of hate
And kept her suffering response
Within her sorrowed heart

SHE
Finally decided on a visit
Much objection even from her son
But she was still and forever
The undeniable mother of hope

SHE
Came to see those of hers
Who seemed stretched
With a love that was broken
by the male demands for crossing

SHE
Felt what had been
Her suffering long ago
Was here again repeated
In this brutal fiction

SHE
Knew now the total
As she knew then
She must stay and suffer
With those who also suffer

SHE
Could not now return
The epiphany of hope
Made it impossible not to stay
Until what was sacrificial

IS MADE SACRED FOR ALL

A Great Gift

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basic tenets of our faith. The corpus on the crucifix reminds us that suffering and death come to us all, but it also tells us that Jesus transcends our temporal misery. We can truly trust Him not only with our life, but with our death and dying as well.

As Christians we believe that God is the Author of life, the One who made us in His image. That alone is the source of human dignity. Therefore it is not in the domain of the human to end a life, not even the one that belongs to her/him. The difficulty is that although our changing circumstances can become undignified (through disease or poverty or the actions of others) our inherent human dignity is unalterable. It cannot be changed nor bestowed by anything we or anyone else may do. Put another way, there exists no prescription that any physician can write for human dignity.

In Massachusetts, we are soon faced with a decision that has the potential to cause a sea change in the eroding social contract to care for one another when we are the most vulnerable. The so-called Massachusetts Death With Dignity Act authorizes physicians to write prescriptions for lethal drugs for patients who request them on the basis of terminal illness. Supporters for this Act reject the notion of human dignity as a gift from God; rather they describe it in terms of personal autonomy, freedom, and self determination. All important concerns certainly, just not as important as the gift of life itself.

It is said that "thoughts are giants" and "ideas have consequences." One of the consequences of physician-assisted suicide is the notion that we can reduce or eliminate suffering by eliminating the sufferer, so long as it is a free choice and in the last six months of life. Set aside for a moment that both factors are difficult to determine with certainty. Additionally assisted suicide will have the effect of rendering us unwilling and/or incompetent to truly care for one another when suffering is intractable but not terminal, or when the sufferer lives until dying a natural death.

I am very grateful that my brother gave me the opportunity to take care of him at the end of his life. I am certainly not alone in my gratitude. Having cared well for a dying person is a great gift for the caregiver, one that comes with peace of mind when the last breath is drawn. The certain knowledge that everything that could be done was done, imperfectly for sure, but in love nonetheless, is precious. Just ask Geri, or Joe, or so many others who have done the same. We should be prepared to defend human life on principle, as well as with our presence. Ω

Editor's Note: Jo Massarelli, an extended member of the Saints Francis & Thérèse Catholic Worker community, is a graduate of Georgetown University who works with families, human service staff, and people with impairments to bring about positive change, one person at a time.

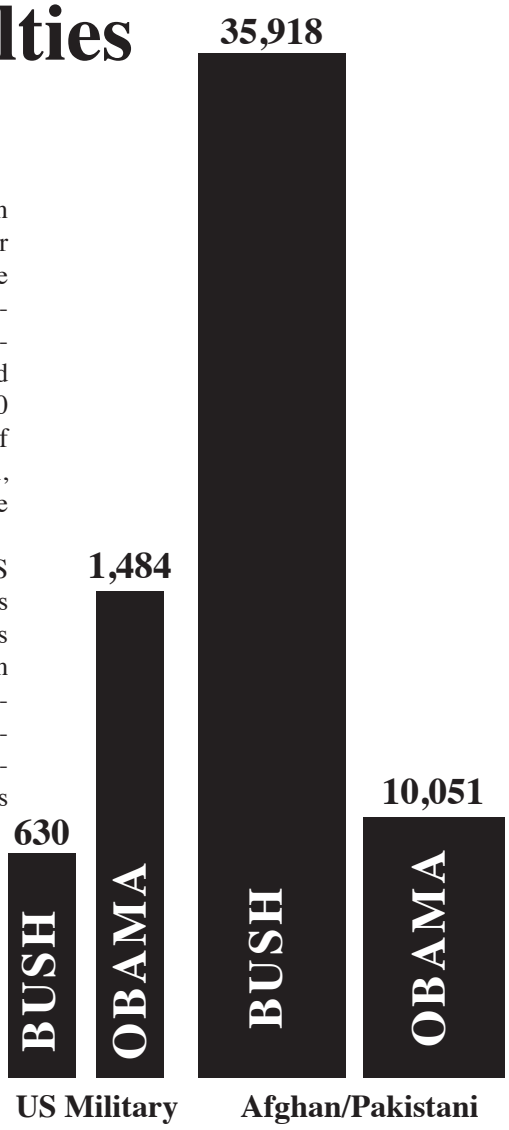
The Massachusetts "Death with Dignity" Initiative, also known as Question 2, will appear on the November 6, 2012 general election ballot. A "no" vote will defeat the measure.

The Casualties Mount

The US/NATO War in Afghanistan began in November, 2001. Over 20,000 Afghans were killed in the first four weeks. During the remaining seven years of the Bush administration, over 16,000 Afghans and Pakistanis were killed, along with 630 Americans. In the first three and a half years of the Obama administration, 10,041 Afghans and Pakistanis have been killed and 1,477 Americans.

By all measurements, the US war is a catastrophic failure. Attacks against US and other NATO troops by supposed Afghan allies are at an all-time high, as are US military suicides. Despite unprecedented investment of US dollars, the Afghan government remains one of the world's most corrupt. A representative of a humanitarian aid organization in Afghanistan referred to the Karzai government as "a mafia."

Despite the mounting death tolls, neither President Obama nor Mitt Romney nor the American public is paying much attention to the war. The urgency to end this pointless killing remains. Please join us in our peace weekly vigil on Tuesdays from 4-5 PM in Worcester's Lincoln Square. Ω



Sources:www. icasualties.org, Associated Press, Human Rights Watch, UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as of Sept. 13, 2012.

Letters

Franz Masereel

Hi Scott, Claire, and all,
So I sit on my front porch in Burlington, Vermont, reading "The Cost of War" article from the most recent *Catholic Radical*. As always, it's provocative, and I'm glad to have read it.

We're just here for the summer, but Burlington has lived up to its hype of being an earthy, conscientious, community-minded town — and stunningly gorgeous, too. The one drawback that is rarely mentioned: twice a day most weekdays, the Air Force flies two F-15s over the town. Loud and obnoxious. I can only think of our huge military complex whenever I hear them. To worsen the deal, the Air Force wants to congratulate the local division by bringing the new, elite F-35 to the area. It's created quite a stir (because Vermonters are informed and conscientious, ready to question the government), but one of the complaints I've heard mentioned most often is the noise.

I feel mixed about the noise. Yes, it's obnoxious, probably decreases property values, and definitely unnerves me as I'm trying to put our toddler down for a nap. But maybe, just maybe, it's a brief way to connect with all those living in war zones, who are perpetually living in fear of such sounds. Or a way to remember that, even though Burlington appears to be a utopia, we are actually still within the borders of the US, paying into the largest military in the world.

Either way, it's a twice-daily reminder to pray for peace.

Anyway, just thought you'd like to know about the hype up here.

Liz (Fallon) Kurtz
Burlington, Vermont

Dear Scott and Claire,
My heart goes out to Barbara Johnson (who was denied communion at her mother's funeral) but my heart is not surprised that she was denied access to the Blessed Sacrament, presumably for having/being with a female partner.

Too many of us have been driven out of the Church, denied full participation in the Mass and reception of the Eucharist.

Some of us, myself included, are temporarily or permanently without partners and thus may remain in the "good graces" of the Church, albeit on the fringe. We are not without sympathy, however, for our lesbian sisters who may be in relationships, and, we are not without courage to speak up for them and for ourselves.

The Church mandates against gay sexual expression. This is not of course an *ex-cathedra* mandate.

For those of us who love the Church, for whom the Church lives in our very bones, this mandate against our lifestyle is torture.

We do trust in God, however, and rely on His mercy that someday we will be vindicated.

Someday the Church will know what psychologists have known for years: that we are an alternative, but not an evil, form of sexuality. That we too must and love as Christ has taught us to love and that we too are loved as we truly are, in Christ.

Finally, we must remember Galileo, who suffered house arrest for the rest of his life at the hands of the Vatican for the crime of proclaiming that the earth does in fact revolve around the sun.

The Vatican can and does make mistakes — and the Vatican is very slow to correct them.

Let us pray that this travesty against us, your sisters, may be righted soon.
Peace to all God's children,

Geri DiNardo
Worcester, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: Geri is a long-time member of the Catholic Worker movement and a dear friend. After reading her letter at a community meeting, Scott wrote to Geri thanking her for such a heartfelt and personal letter but expressed concerns about how, as a Catholic Worker community, we could respond. She sent the following reply:

Dear Scott,
...I want to address in particular the part in your letter about the "want to express positions which can be defended by appealing to Scripture, tradition, saints, bishops, and popes. We think this is Dorothy Day's genius and Peter Maurin's too."

Well, Scott, if that be the case, the discussion may already be dead in the water.

I prefer to look at this particular issue from the point-of-view of the lived experience of some who love God, love the Church, and wish to live a same-sex relationship as Christ would have us live.

There is little to be said of this issue and Peter Maurin. He surely would not have favored homosexuality—sexual or celibate, given the Church or secular culture of the day.

Dorothy paints a slightly different picture.

I was in California in the 70's just after Jan Adams (an editor of the CW New York newspaper in the earlier days) returned from New York after asking Dorothy if they might at least broach the subject of homosexuality in the CW paper. Dorothy refused.

I think she refused because of not wanting to stand against the Church on this issue. It really does go against current Church teaching.

I do not think Dorothy would support gay/lesbian sex even today.

For a support of this sexuality demands a change in how we think about sex — a change from its primary purpose being promulgation of progeny to its primary purpose being pleasuring one's partner and expression of love as God loves.

Yet we know that many CWs have been

and are gay and we know that Dorothy knew, too, but, were they all celibate? And did Dorothy know this?

So, no, I do not believe Dorothy would speak for us, even now. Who will speak for us?

As for Scripture and tradition, we only know or think we know that Jesus never spoke of homosexuality at all — traditionally, though it has been anathema. So, who will speak for us?

As for the saints, well, surely there have been gay and lesbian saints. In my mind, there would have to be. But were there any who were not celibate? We do not know. These issues, to my knowledge, have not been discussed until recent years. So, who will speak for us?

Yes, Scott, the criteria you mention, though noble, leave us once again nowhere to turn in the Church.

Perhaps we now need new criteria for making these judgments within the Church.

I find myself with the need to speak for ourselves. All of us who try to love God as Christ, love one another in Christ, we must try to speak for ourselves to our heterosexual brothers and sisters. We must try to love ourselves, each other, and the Church.

Perhaps, in the end, only we will speak for us.

All of this is to say, Scott, that the usual mode for defense of the argument— Dorothy and Peter's stance, Scripture, tradition, lives of the saints, bishops, and popes does not appear to be able to work in this case.

Instead, we may need to rely on trust in God to guide us, our own life experience, the word of good and holy people far more learned than I, and prayer, much prayer.

So, thanks for your attention. You and Claire are regularly in my prayers and I adore you both.

Geri DiNardo
Worcester, Massachusetts

Editor's Note: The Catholic Worker movement has always been marked by its diversity. We have members from different religions, races, and sexual orientations. Some of the most committed members are gay. Everyone is welcome at the Catholic Worker.

In recent years, several Protestant Churches have begun performing gay marriages. Several Catholic Worker communities have argued for gay rights as a justice issue. Some of them would undoubtedly urge the Catholic Church to stop opposing civil gay marriage, and to start performing it as a sacrament. This challenges current Catholic teaching which defines the sacrament of marriage as a covenantal union between a man and a woman. It also challenges the definition of marriage given by Christ in Matthew 19:4-6.

Our criteria for how we decide what issues to challenge has been to go to the roots of Catholicism: Scripture, tradition, the lives of the saints, and the teaching of the Catholic hierarchy. Using those tools, we called for the ordination of women to the priesthood, despite the strong opposition of the last two popes. Because the hierarchy focuses so heavily on sexual questions, to the detriment of peace and economic justice, we have largely avoided them. We believe human sexuality is innately good and intensely personal. In our hospitality, on Mason Street, we have never sanctioned sex between unmarried couples, gay or straight.

Geri's letter tugs at our hearts because we recognize that the life-long sexual abstinence the Church demands of gay Catholics must indeed be torturous. We are moved by her courageous honesty and faith in the Catholic community. Nonetheless, we cannot join Geri's appeal without putting aside those tools which define our Catholic faith.

Perhaps the Catholic hierarchy will come to accept gay marriage, as have many Protestant Churches. Perhaps, we will come to believe that gay marriage is an issue so compelling that we must leave the Catholic Church and rename ourselves using a small "c," like the Waukesha catholic Worker community. We do not feel called to do that now. We do not have consensus on the question of gay marriage and, moreover, we still find too much goodness within the Church to leave it.

Catholic Worker Calendar

THEY SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNING HOOKS ONE NATION SHALL NOT RAISE THE SWORD AGAINST ANOTHER; NOR SHALL THEY TRAIN FOR WAR AGAIN...

Rita Corbin

October 8 & 22 November 12 — Mass or Evening Prayer: Please join us in prayer and song on Mason Street at 7:30 P.M. Refreshments to follow.

October 3 & 10 — Round Table Discussions on Catholic Social Teaching: Michael Boover, Marc Tumeinski, and Sr. Rena Mae Gagnon, PFM. 7-9 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

October 24 —US Militarization of Africa: A presentation by Xaverian missionary Fr. Rocco Puopolo, former director of the Africa Fatih and Justice Network. 7 P.M., 52 Mason Street. Refreshments to follow.

For more information, call: 508 753-3588

Mason Street Musings

We endured a hot, dry July here on Mason Street. Drenching August rains brought relief from those dispiriting days and the nightly ritual of watering the garden. I sometimes resented having to haul out the dusty hose to soak the vegetable beds and buckets of basil. The hour-long task made a long day longer.

But there were times when I relished the mysterious vibrancy of the garden on a summer night, the scent of mint in moonlight. Plants, once droopy in the afternoon heat, stood erect in the darkness, their leaves full and dramatically unfurled.

Now the lean months of summer give way to the abundance of autumn. An eggplant the size of a football grows beside the wispy carrots. Squash sprawls lavishly across the front garden fence. It feels pleasantly exotic to be able to step out the back door and pluck the ingredients for our supper, as if we were residents of a sunny, Mediterranean villa rather than a cramped, but homey, dwelling in Worcester.

Our table is almost always crowded, the requests for hospitality so frequent, I give up trying to keep count. In the evening, while cooking supper, I listen to radio news. How surreal to hear politicians speak of "American exceptionalism" and the need to "get over" our fear of success while the phone rings off the hook with pleas from people begging for shelter.

Many of the callers are young. During a week in late August, I fielded requests from a pregnant 19-year-old evicted from a foreclosed building; an 18-year old, who had been camping in the woods, unable to pay the bills after his father's arrest; and F., a 21-year émigré from a poor, crime-ridden neighborhood in Miami. He had

to get out of Miami, he told me, because he was "losing hope." We are accustomed to hosting economic refugees from other lands, but these American migrants, many from Florida, are new to us. They come searching for jobs, housing, better healthcare, a bit of hope.

F. is here, but we had no room for the 19-year old who called yesterday asking for a bed until he received his first paycheck for a part-time job at Walmart. "I'm nineteen," he kept saying.

There are days when I want to hurl the telephone out the window.

Amid the need, we have received much support. Thanks to all of you who responded to our tales of financial woe with generous contributions. We could not continue without your help.

Throughout the summer, old friends and community members, including Timothy and Christa Aikens-Hill and their three sweet daughters stopped by to visit. More than fifty people crammed into the house for an August Mass commemorating our 25 years on Mason Street. The night was hot and we sweated as we listened to Bishop Rueger, in his inimitable style, speak about creating "colonies of love."

"Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way," wrote the Jesuit Pedro Arrupe. "What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your week-ends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything."

Here on Mason Street, we are celebrating the romantic love of our eldest son Justin and Patricia Kirkpatrick. The two marry on September 22, the fall equinox. As the earth spins into its autumnal orbit, we will dance and dine beneath a big white tent in a meadow beside a mountain, feasting on soups and pesto made with basil from gardens we were obliged to water throughout our dry July. Blessed autumn everyone.Ω **Claire**

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